



INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You've got yourself a greasy little tone machine there – keep a few wet naps handy, you're gonna need 'em!

The Catalinbread Formula No. 5 is a tweed-era flavored overdrive that takes its inspiration from the classic 1950s 5E3 architecture providing a smooth yet aggressive sound and a highly dynamic interaction between player and pedal. Responsive to both picking attack and pickup type, the Formula No.5 like the amps it is modeled after is at its heart a 'set and forget' type of affair – you set your maximum desired gain level on the pedal with your guitar volumes full up then back them off for your lower gain or clean tones. So with that in mind, let's fire it up!

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QUICK START GUIDE

We suggest on first play that you only have the Formula No. 5 plugged in between your guitar and amp – this will give you the best opportunity to hear the pedal in its truest sense so you can suss what the pedal is giving you back in terms of harmonic content and dynamic response and feel. Set your amplifier up for a nice clean sound or just on the verge of breakup – the Formula No.5 will take it from there.

CONTROLS

VOLUME controls overall output volume and is capable of overdriving the input of your amplifier for additional saturation. Having this much output on tap to boost your amp can effectively give you the same type of ‘channel volume interaction’ found on the amps when you balance it with the Gain control.

TONE a simple high pass filter arrangement like on the amps that decreases in its effect near maximum Gain settings. Goes from smooth and buttery to extra crispy at full up. Who wants fried chicken? I do!

GAIN this control begins where a 5E3-style amp would be with its Volume on about 3 or so and goes beyond what a typical 5E3 circuit would deliver gain-wise. If you’ve ever played a real 5E3 you know that it doesn’t really come alive until you open it up some – clean tones are in there, but you have to get to them via the guitar’s volume controls. The Formula No.5 is no different.

Humbuckers and higher output single coil pickups will overdrive the Formula No.5 fairly easily, so if you are playing a guitar with these type pickups go easy on the Gain control at first unless you want to channel Neil Young out of the gate.

Using the Volume and Tone controls to get you close to the base volume and EQ settings of your amp, start with the Gain control at minimum and gradually bump it up after a few seconds of play - listen for the fat harmonics that start to inject themselves into the decay of chords or double stops – nice, right? Keep going until you’ve maxed out the Gain control – a softer, spongier attack or ‘sag’ is happening now. This is the effect that happens to a real 5E3 when it’s dimed and the output transformer is begging for mercy. If you play slide or lap steel, you should really dig this level of juicy saturation.

Okay, back that Gain control off to about 2:00 and let’s try cleaning up the pedal some using your guitar’s volume control – roll it back to about 7 and listen for the pick attack to tighten up and the compression level to decrease significantly. The EQing will change from a prominent greasy midrange to a stringier, more defined bass attack and a chimey treble response. Perfect for rhythm stuff, yeah? Now let’s go for an even cleaner sound by rolling that guitar volume back to about 4 or 5 – you should have a nice airy clean sound that still has a good lively edge to it – neck humbuckers sound incredible at these settings. Grant Green tones live here – if you don’t know who he is shame on you! lol



GOING DEEPER

If you're curious, now would also be a great time to experiment with the power source. Try it on a battery first – it will have the greatest amount of looseness to the attack and compression to the sound at max gain. A 9vDC power supply will give you a little more oomph and definition. At 18vDC the Formula No.5 takes on a much bigger sound – more volume on tap, more headroom before clipping, a faster pick attack, and a wider EQ spread. It's still in the tweed family, but now it's moved past the lower wattage 6V6 tones and headed more into the cranked 6L6s with multiple speakers type sounds – more punch to the attack and a beefier sound overall with less compression happening.

STACKING WITH OTHER PEDALS

You've already discovered that the Formula No.5 has plenty of gain all on its own, but for those who want more (and let's be honest - you know you do) there are a few combinations we can endorse that sound great with the Formula No.5:

TREBLE BOOSTERS: Running one of these into the Formula No.5 will add gain and focus the midrange even more for soloing or can tighten up the attack of a neck humbucker at high gain settings. Our Naga Viper is a perfect mate even if we do say so ourselves.

COMPRESSORS: These can sound fantastic in front of the Formula No.5 to add even more singing sustain and soften the attack even further. Using a hard pick attack, power chords will swell like a balloon and get bigger sounding as they decay. Rad!

FUZZES: Certain fuzzes can add a unique character to the Formula No.5 - Tonebenders, Fuzz Faces, almost all of the '60s style fuzzes work well boosting it like our Merkin Fuzz for example. Most Muff-based fuzzes have too much low end to run in front of the Formula No.5, but that doesn't mean that you can't place those type fuzzes AFTER the Formula No.5 and use it to boost the fuzz and add midrange.

CLEAN BOOSTS: Another nice option for bumping the gain and compression level of the Formula No.5 without imparting a radically different EQ flavor. Depending on how much boost is used you can get the Formula No.5 to crunch up a bit, or crank it and completely obliterate it for 'OMFG my amp is melting!' tones. Save hundreds in blown speakers! Lol

Placement of various effects in the signal chain isn't an exact science, but it certainly pays to experiment as the resulting combinations can have MAJOR sonic differences. As far as the Formula No.5 is concerned, it should be treated as though it were your 'preamp' – so most boosts or fuzzes should be placed before it in the signal chain. Modulation effects can go either side, though they will certainly have an impact on the feel and attack characteristics if placed before it.

CONCLUSION

We hope you dig the Formula No.5 and enjoy spending some time exploring the variety of sounds that can come from such a relatively simple circuit. The ultimate goal of a pedal like this is to reacquaint you with the knobs on your guitar and the way you approach your strings so that you can forget about tap dancing and concentrate on your instrument and music you're creating. Have fun and thanks VERY much for your support!



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